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November 2, 2015

A Two Fronted Approach to Combatting Daesh: The Benefits of Pursuing a United Realist and Constructivist Theoretical Approach

"As you know on this side of the Wall

we are Yooks.

On the far side of this Wall

live the Zooks…

It's high time that you know

of the horrible thing that Zooks do.

In every Zook house and in every Zook town

every Zook eats his bread

with the butter side down."

-Dr. Seuss "Butter Battle Book (1984)[1]

Dr. Seuss, in his children's book *Butter Battle Book*, provides an example by which to understand the differences between Constructivist and Realist theories of International Relations. According to John Mearsheimer and his fellow realists the central fact necessary to understanding the conflict between the Yooks and Zooks is who has the greatest absolute military advantage. For a while the Yooks are better because they have the military advantage because they have the "tough-rufted prickly Snick Berry Switch," but as military innovation increases and the Zooks develop the "Jigger Rock Snachem" the military advantage goes to the Zooks. As a result of the escalating military and geopolitical tension between the Zooks and the

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[1] Dr. Seuss, *The Butter Battle Book* (New York: Random House Publishers, 1984)

Yooks, the General of the Yooks feels the need to drop his bomb on the Zooks in order to protect his own interests and maintain his own security, and we are led to believe that the general of the Zooks is acting in the same manner.

Alternately, constructivists see the central issue to be that the Yooks eat bread with the butter side up, but Zooks eat their bread with the butter side down. Thus the question for resolution isn't so much what geopolitical decisions must be made to stop the "Bitsy Big-boy Boomeros" from being dropped, it is the cultural disparity between the two groups. Constructivists are focusing on the sociological structures that constrain the Yooks and the Zooks that would drive them to try to wipe each off of the face of the planet. Now the Yooks and the Zooks are a silly example, but Dr. Seuss was aptly describing, in terms that children could understand, his view of the realities of the Cold War in 1984. Dr. Seuss wrote this book in approximately the same time period that constructivism took off as an alternative to realist and liberalist approaches to International Relations.

King Abdullah II of Jordan stood before the UN General Assembly and said, "This crisis is a third world war and I believe we must respond with equal intensity. That means global collective action on all fronts."[2] The threat he spoke of is the so-called Islamic State (hereafter referred to as Daesh)[3] that has been making territorial gains in Iraq and Syria. In response to this threat, the U.S. has built a coalition of 62 countries from all corners of the globe to fight the fundamentalists of Daesh.[4] A major part of this effort has included airstrikes against Daesh

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[2] "'Hashemite Custodianship of Jerusalem's Islamic and Christian Holy Sites Is a Sacred Duty'" Jordan Times. September 28, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015. http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/hashemite-custodianship-jerusalem's-islamic-and-christian-holy-sites-sacred-duty'#sthash.vNZVAZdL.dpuf.

[3] For more information regarding this nomenclature please see the section: What is Daesh?

[4] Payne, Sebastian. "What the 60-plus Members of the Anti-Islamic State Coalition Are Doing." Washington Post. September 25, 2014. Accessed December 14, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2014/09/25/what-the-60-members-of-the-anti-islamic-state-coalition-are-doing/.

positions in coordination with traditional conception of military solutions to problems that is suggested by realists as the most effective method. To draw back to the example in the *Butter Battle Book* the coalition is using its "Jigger-Rock Snachems" (F-16s) and "Kick-A-Poo Kid" (Special Forces Units) to stop Daesh from acting against them. However, there has been little success in pushing back forces militarily thus far.

However, the anti-Daesh coalition, particularly branches of the U.S. Department of State, are also embarking on a different strategy that does not exist within the neorealist, military-driven paradigm. A committee has been called to develop a counter-messaging campaign to attack not the physical positions of Daesh throughout Iraq and Syria, but rather on the psychological and ideological battleground of identity. The rationale for this kind of campaign arises from the theory of social constructivism that grew out of the geopolitical situation in the 1980s and 1990s that Dr. Seuss illustrates in the *Butter Battle Book*. The details of both of these campaigns, their success, and the theories that underpin them will be discussed at length in the content section of this paper. However, before it is possible to pass judgement on the success of constructivism in producing a successful strategy in countering Daesh we must first understand the theory of constructivism.

Understanding Constructivism:

Social constructivism is based on four major assumptions as defined by Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi. First, constructivism, like Liberalism, "Seeks to problematize identities and interests of states."[5] For example, in the case of Daesh, constructivists would ask, "What about the state of affairs in the Arab world and larger Muslim world leads individuals to participate in a radical Islamist state such as Daesh?" It would look at the state of nationality and nationalism in

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[5] Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi, *International Relations Theory* (Pearson Education, 2012), 278

the Arab states. Furthermore, it would look at the ways in which unemployment and failing state social welfare programs in Egypt (and other countries) might be contributing to a greater self-identification with Islam than with Egyptian nationalism

Second, this theory conceptualizes the "international structure in terms of a social structure infused with ideational factors to include norms, rules, and laws."[6] This assumption addresses the fact that there are issues and ideas that are more important to individuals than the maintenance of security. Neo-realists claim that the primary goal of any state is the preservation of order and security within the sovereign state.[7]   However, sometimes the state does not have a united front because the state leader wants to preserve the status quo, but the status quo fails to address the needs of the people. This sentiment of the government not fulfilling their obligations to the population is what set off the Arab Spring protests in 2011. Mohamed Bouazizi, a vegetable seller, set himself on fire before a government building in Tunisia, because despite his university degree the only job he could get was selling vegetables. The Tunisian government led by President Ben Ali, was not addressing the central concerns of his people namely employment and affordable necessities. When the central concerns of the people do not align with the central concerns of security, the efficacy of realist theory to explain the consequential events falls into question. It, therefore, falls to constructivism to explain why the citizens' conception of state obligations fail to align with the ideas of the state regarding its obligations to the people. In scenarios such as these the norms and ideas of the citizens regarding leadership, play as significant a role as the leadership itself.

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[6] Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory,* 278
[7] John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2001), 31

Third, as Adler writes, "Constructivism sees the world as a project under construction, as becoming rather than being."[8] Extensive research undertaken by Martha Finnemore, among others, seeks to understand the transition from a focus on the primacy of national sovereignty to the norms of humanitarianism and universal rights. However, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region a major shift in the construction of the international structure changed on September 11, 2001. The emergence of the War on Terror created a norm of Islamist extremism that continues to gain strength fourteen years later.[9] Unfortunately, the American-led fight against radical Islam has only succeeded in the perpetuation of that which it wishes to destroy. There were three terrorist attacks in 2000, since then the trend has been ever increasing in both the number of attacks, and the causality caused by such actions. There was a peak of terrorism in 2007, and more concerning yet is the steep rise in terrorist attacks since 2011 has far superseded the number of attacks in 2007. In 2011 there were approximately seven terrorist attacks, in 2014 there were approximately thirty-two attacks.[10] The rapid increase of these attacks should signal to the entire world the dangers posed by terrorism. It should indicate to policy makers that the way we are currently conducting the War on Terror is accomplishing the opposite of its aim. To effectively understand the realities that exist in the MENA region today it is essential to address the growth of Islamist radicalism and its counterpart of counterterrorism measures as a new norm that shapes state and public conceptions both within the region and in the larger international sphere.

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[8] Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory,* 292

[9] While the acts on 9/11 were a result of Islamist radical terrorism they also created a recognition and an infamous position for these groups within the internationals structure.

[10] "The Plague of Global Terrorism." The Economist. November 18, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015. http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/11/daily-chart-12.

Fourth, constructivists believe that given the inherent and inescapable subjectivity of human beings, the ability of political scientists to achieve a purely objective conception of political realities is impossible. Alexander Wendt, a leading constructivist scholar, sees international relations as inherently social. He writes, "It is through ideas that states ultimately relate to one another… [And it is] these ideas [that] help define who and what states are."[11] This underlying assumption of constructivism focuses less on the explanation of specific occurrences and more on the organization of the scope of research constructivists can undertake, and the answers constructivists will accept. Martha Finnemore's *National Interests in International Society* provides an example of this difference. She frames her investigation on the impact of similarities between the behavior of state actors rather than on their divergence. This runs contrary to the generally accepted methodology of realists and institutionalists such as Keohane, King, and Verba. She states:

> "Theoretical anomalies should be investigated, and if those anomalies are anomalies of similarity we need to investigate similarity. King, Keohane, and Verba [in their "Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research] are correct about the limits of their methods for this kind of problem. That does not mean that we should ignore the problem; it means we should explore new methods and new approaches."[12]

Constructivists, while they do not reject the positivist, scientific conception of methodology used by realists, neo-realists, institutionalists, and often liberals, they are more willing to pursue research that falls outside of that traditional methodology. Constructivists do not go as far as political philosophy and do not accept answers without some form of qualitative or quantitative

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[11] Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory,* 294
[12] Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 26

evidence to support their suppositions. Constructivists recognize that arriving at a "Truth" is not

achievable, however, that is no reason to stop trying to achieve a better understanding. Viotti

and Kauppi describe Wendt's perspective this way: "While we may not have unmediated access

to the world, we can still make great strides in understanding how it works, yet be humble about

the truth claims we assert."[13]

Another major difference between constructivism and the more traditional theories of

international relations lies in the difference between realism's logic of consequences and

constructivism's logic of appropriateness. A logic of consequences is based on the economics

principle that asserts states will act in the way that best meets their interests unless acted upon by

an outside influence that inhibits their action. For example, it may have met American interests

during the Cold War to launch a nuclear attack against the U.S.S.R. to get rid of the only major

threat to U.S. global hegemony—which is Mearshiemer's ultimate aim of all states. However,

mutual assured destruction (MAD) created too high of consequences for the U.S. to pursue their

optimum scenario. The logic of consequences derives from the Machiavellian conception of do

what you can get away with. Alternately, the logic of appropriateness theorizes what states

should do rather than what they can do. It focuses on a sense of universal duty among states. A

clear example of this principle is the argument that the U.S., the world's unitary super power,

needs to intervene in the Syrian Civil War because it is a humanitarian crisis of a level not seen

since the holocaust.[14]

The logic of appropriateness claims that there is a "right" thing to do. However, how

rightness is conceptualized is a question that is hard to answer. Correct behavior can come from

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[13] Viotti and Kauppi, *International Relations Theory,* 293

[14] Tobia, P.J. "The Worst Humanitarian Crisis since World War II." PBS. July 29, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/worst-humanitarian-crisis-since-world-war-ii/.

four different areas. First, in coordination with realist conceptualization, ideas of correctness can come from within the state, or at least from state officials. For example, when Woodrow Wilson attended the negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles, he brought with him his famous Fourteen Points, that included what he saw, and what he believed America saw, as the right path for the world to take following the horrible destruction following World War I. Second, what is right can be defined from above. Organizations like the United Nations (UN) can define through written law what the correct action should be. The UN's Declaration of Human Rights epitomizes this effort. Decisions of the European Union, particularly those facing them today with the Syrian refugee crisis, are an example of a supranational body is responsible for deciding what constitutes "right" action. The third body that can define right action is the public. This is in line with Doyle, Rummel, and Russet's liberal work on Democratic Peace Theory. In this situation it is the public within a state, or particular bodies within the state, that will encourage particular actions. For example, the American public rose up and protested American involvement and practices during the Vietnam War eventually causing the embarrassing American withdrawal in 1973. Furthermore, specific interest groups within the state can also play central role. For example, the ultraorthodox Jews in Israel consistently win seats in the Knesset and will join any coalition that supports their special dispensations, especially with regard to military service, thus they have a seat at the table for whatever groups are in control of the government. The fourth and final definition of correct action is the arena constructivism focuses most extensively on—international norms. Finnemore discusses the international norm of treatment of prisoners of war (POWs). Before the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Geneva Convention in October 1863 there were no protections for enemy injured or medical personnel. Today, the cost of violating these

international norms are quite extensive, and Daesh has felt the brunt of these extensive

violations. These norms become so natural that only those on the fringe of the international

system will consider violating them. Those who do violate these norms face censure from the

entire international community. This example can be seen in the fact that approximately half of

the world's recognized nations are currently members of the anti-Daesh coalition.

Constructivists focus on how and why these norms are developed and their impact on the

international system.

However, constructivism, like many International Relations theories, exists as a reaction

to realist theory. In many ways, realism is still the primary paradigm through which policy

makers view the world. Therefore, it is necessary to take a moment and understand the

underlying assumptions of realism. John Mearsheimer is one of the foremost scholars on realist

theory, particularly the branch of neorealism that is most common among world leaders. The

basic logic of Mearsheimer's theory is that power and power-seeking is the code of international

politics. He claims that power is a finite good, therefore, subject to a zero-sum game.[15] He

writes that, "The system encourages states to look for opportunities to maximize their power vis-

à-vis other states."[16] For Mearsheimer the increasing power of Daesh in the Middle East, must

result in the loss of that power away from other state actors in the region. To Mearshimer and

his colleagues, the agent in International Relations is the state actor. The UN, or the Senate

Foreign Relations Committee play a role in International Relations for the realist, but they do not

play the primary role.

The Baseline Theory: Understanding Realism

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[15] David, Skidmore. "Modern Realist Theory." Lecture, International Relations Senior Seminar, Des Moines,
September 21, 2015.
[16] John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 29

Mearsheimer conceptualizes the world based on five major assumptions. The first is that the international system is based in anarchy, that there can be no greater power than the nation-state. This completely discounts the idea of norms as expressed by Finnemore. Second is that all great powers have some offensive capacity. For Mearsheimer, this capacity must take the form of military power. Third he assumes that it is impossible for any state to know the intentions of any other state, and this creates an inherently distrustful community of nations. Fourth, he assumes that the primary goal of all great powers is survival. Fifth, he believes that great powers are rational actors.[17] These assumptions become problematic when trying to address actors like Daesh that are not great powers, but often do not adhere to the traditional conception of rational action either.

For Mearshimer, the main measure of this theory is military capacity. If a nation has the military capacity to address a threat to their security or their hegemony they have not only the right but the obligation to do so. Hegemony is central to Mearshimer's theory. He defines a hegemon as "a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system."[18] He claims that it is the aim of all states to become a hegemon, because it is the one way to insure security and the survival of the state. And he believes that the only way that can be accomplished is through military exploits, but more importantly the only way it can be maintained is through conquest. In trying to decide which country has more power, what Mearshimer is examining is not which country has the more truthful or more convincing ideology, but rather which country has the greater military capacity.

By this logic, the easy solution to the problem of Daesh is to destroy all Daesh positions and then win a war against them. Likely, the U.S. alone and certainly the U.S. in coordination

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[17] John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 30-31
[18] John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 40

with 62 other countries has the capacity to crush Deash militarily. The fact that we have not

chosen that path leads to the question: "Why have the U.S. and our allies not marched on Mosul

to retake the city from Daesh, when we certainly have the military capacity to do so?" And of

more importance from a constructivist point of view: "Why is it perhaps dangerous to make that

decision?"

The challenge lies in finding a balance between the militarism of realism, which drives

much of the world's policy; and the constructivists focus on norms and ideas.   Mearshimer's

military advantage theory tells us that we *can* defeat Daesh, we *can* retake Mosul, and Irbil, and

Raqqa. We *can* do that, but constructivism tells us why perhaps we *should not* make that choice.

However, it is vital that we recognize that in order to defeat Daesh we must know our enemy and

defeat his ideas through the constructivist lens, but also destroy the land that Daesh controls

because without the land of the caliphate Daesh cannot command the support of the Muslim

people.

What is Daesh:

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL),

the Islamic State, Daesh, the organization that is currently controlling Syrian and Iraqi territory

approximately the size of Great Britain goes by many names.[19] The self-given name of this

organization when transliterated into English is: al-dowlea al-islamia fii al-iraq wa al-shaam. All

of that translates to English either as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or Syria or

Damascus. [20] [21] The Islamic State is the name preferred by the organization itself; however, this

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[19] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants." The Atlantic. February 15, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015.
http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/.

[20] There is some ambiguity in translating al-Shaam because there is not a real English equivalent to the region being
referenced. The closest translation is the area near Damascus.

[21] Guthrie, Alice. "Free Word." Decoding Daesh: Why Is the New Name for ISIS so Hard to Understand? February
19, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015. https://www.freewordcentre.com/blog/2015/02/daesh-isis-media-alice-
guthrie/.

name is often offensive to Muslims and therefore anytime it arises in this paper it will be referred

to as Daesh. Daesh is an Arabic acronym coined by a Syrian artist to refer to the so-called

Islamic State. It is important to understand that while in English acronyms are nearly as

common as regular words, they almost never exist in Arabic (Hamas being one of the few

exceptions). Therefore, referring to the so-called Islamic State as Daesh belittles them and takes

away their legitimacy as a state.[22] It is for this reason that some nations, such as France, have

taken to referring to this organization in this manner.[23] It is also for that reason that this paper

will refer to this organization as Daesh.

Understanding what Daesh is called it is important to understand what Daesh is. How did

it come into being? Where is it? Who is part of it? What theology underpins it? It is vital that

policy makers understand the answers to these questions in order to effectively combat this

organization. As Major General Michall K Nagatu, the Special Operations Commander for the

United States in the Middle East said, "We have not defeated the idea, we do not even

understand the idea."[24] Daesh was originally part of Al Qaeda Iraq, under the overarching control

of the Al Qaeda network currently headed by Ayman al-Zawahiri.[25] Daesh split with Al Qaeda

Iraq over ideological differences, in part due to ideological differences between Abu Muhammad

al Maqdisi of Al Qaeda and his protégé Abu Musa'b al Zarqawi, the head Al Qaeda Iraq who

broke off to form Daesh,.[26] One of the major differences in theology came from the timetable

attributed to the apocalypse. Daesh believed that the apocalypse could be brought about in their

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[22] Guthrie, Alice. "Decoding Daesh: Why Is the New Name for ISIS so Hard to Understand?"
[23] Readhead, Harry. "This Is Why More People Are Using the Word 'Daesh' Instead of 'Isis'" Metro Whats in a Name This Is Why More People Are Using the Word Daesh Instead of Isis Comments. November 17, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015. http://metro.co.uk/2015/11/17/whats-in-a-name-this-is-why-more-people-are-using-the-word-daesh-instead-of-isis-5507536/.
[24] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants."
[25] "Al-Qaeda's Remaining Leaders - BBC News." BBC News. June 16, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11489337.
[26] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"

lifetime, while Al Qaeda, as seen in speeches by Osama Bin Laden, believed that while the

apocalypse would occur they would not live to see it.[27] After splitting from Al Qaeda, Daesh

began by working to carve out territory in their original state of Iraq with minimal success except

in largely unpopulated parts of northwest Iraq[28].With the power vacuum created by the 2011

Arab Spring and subsequent Civil War in Syria, Daesh took the opportunity to move into Syria.

Because Daesh already had the military unity and capabilities they took substantial amounts of

territory in Eastern Syria, including the cities of Raqqa and Dabiq. Then they turned their focus

back to the factionalized Iraq after the U.S. withdrew.   They truly came onto the world stage

when in summer 2014 when they took Mosul, the third largest city in Iraq. There was some

concern that they would continue onto take the Kurdish city of Kirkuk, particularly concerning

considering the genocidal tendencies of Daesh. When they were ultimately turned back by Iraqi

and Kurdish forces, Daesh withdrew to the land they already held in Northern Iraq and Eastern

Syria and established a state. Daesh, in an important break with past terrorist groups has

established a state structure. Their "Principles in the Administration of the Islamic State" were

leaked to *The Guardian,* and set forth the way that Daesh will organize 16 centralized

departments that undertake the projects of governing.[29] Daesh now controls a contiguous area

approximately the size of the United Kingdom, although it is important to recognize that much of

this area is sparsely populated.[30]

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[27] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"

[28] "GlobalSecurity.org." Reliable Security Information. Accessed December 14, 2015.
http://www.globalsecurity.org/jhtml/jframe.html#http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/images/map-pop.jpg‖.

[29] Malik, Shiv. "The Isis Paper: Behind 'death Cult' Image Lies a Methodical Bureaucracy." The Guardian.
December 7, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/07/isis-papers-guardian-syria-iraq-bureaucracy.

[30]"GlobalSecurity.org." Reliable Security Information. Accessed December 14, 2015.

Daesh is led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi who has led the organization since May 2010. Prior to his Ramadan sermon on 5 June 2014 the only image the world had of al-Baghdadi was a grainy image from his time in captivity at U.S. Camp Bucca. Following al-Baghdadi's speech he was a high definition figure.[31] He claims to be to be the eighth caliph, the leader of the entire *umma* or the people of Islam.[32] The caliph commands the obedience of all Muslims globally, however, as will be discussed later, there are many reasons why the vast majority of Muslims do not recognize al-Baghdadi's claim to the title of caliph.

However, al-Baghdadi alone could not have undertaken the conquest of the amount of territory he currently rules alone. The soldiers of Daesh are at least as, if not more, important than al-Baghdadi and are far more important to U.S. counter-messaging campaigns. Nothing short of assassination will stop al-Baghdadi and other Daesh leaders, however, it is possible to influence those considering going to fight for Daesh. These efforts will be discussed in more depth later. Peter R. Newman of King's College says that the online outreach and propaganda make sure new Daesh recruits know what to believe.[33] Online recruitment also provides more access to the movement for women, who are traditionally within the home in Muslim households.[34] Foreign fighters come to ISIS from all over the world. The developed and undeveloped world, the east and the west, the Muslim and Christian worlds all have sent fighters to support the efforts of Daesh. Unfortunately, as Graeme Wood [more background-popularity of Atlantic article] writes of these fighters, "many have come to fight, and many intend to die."[35] We need look no further than the Kamikaze pilots in World War II or the suicide bombers on

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[31] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[32] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[33] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[34] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[35] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"

9/11 to see how dangerous an enemy is who is willing to die for their cause. These men and women are flocking to Daesh for religious, ideological, and personal reasons. Many are fleeing from lives where they lack agency or have constantly felt the burn of rampant anti-Muslim discrimination. However, not all subjects of the Daesh caliphate are willing immigrants. Daesh occupied Raqqa, Mosul, as well as a number of other medium sized cities. These in addition to those in Daesh territory that do not live in major population centers. These people live under a repressive theocracy where social media reports indicate that individual killings happen daily and there are mass executions every few weeks; a state where consuming alcohol or cutting your beard is cause for execution. [36] These are the greatest victims of Daesh. The people who died in the attacks in Lebanon, Paris, San Bernardino, and London are absolutely victims of the violent extremist ideology of Daesh, but these people in Raqqa, in Mosul these are the people who suffer every day in a reality of terror, under a medieval state. To use Wood's description the people in Daesh territory are, "living out a drama, from an outsider's perspective, like a medieval fantasy novel, only with real blood."[37]

So what is it that motivated leaders like al-Baghdadi to start this group? What makes them different from other organizations like Al Qaeda? And most importantly what is it that is causing young Muslim men and women around the world to fight and die? It is difficult for Westerners to understand the intrinsic role of religion in Daesh, because it has been so long since the religious wars of Europe where European nations went to war almost constantly in the defense of one form of Christianity or another. This bias assumes that because religion plays a small role in the politics of Germany or the U.S., it cannot play a significant role in Mosul or

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[36] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[37] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"

Raqqa.[38] However, if Western states cannot conceptualize the idea of Daesh, they cannot

effectively defeat the ideology. Both Al Qaeda and Daesh are jihadist elements of Salfaism

which is a derivation of Sunnism.[39] Sunnism is one of the two major branches of Islam and the

branch that a majority of Muslims adhere to that believes that following the death of the Prophet

Mohammed the first leader of the *umma* was elected.[40] Salafism focuses on the "pious

forefathers" (the Prophets and his close friends) as models for all behavior.[41] This means that the

Salafists are modeling their behavior on men who lived in the seventh century CE.

However, it is important to recognize that Salafism is not intrinsically militant.

Generally, Salafists may believe in eventually expanding the *Dar al-Islam* (land of Islam) even

through the Daesh ideas of the apocalypse, however, most believe that they must be internally

pure and prayerful and the Daesh strategy disrupts that internal idea.[42] For example, the word

jihad that Wood uses to describe the militant actions of Daesh comes in five different forms:

Jihad of the heart/soul (greater jihad), jihad by the tongue, jihad by the pen, jihad of the hand,

and jihad by the sword (lesser jihad).[43] Jihad of the heart/soul is the greatest form of jihad and is

a process by which an individual works to find inner peace and be close to Allah by giving up

anger and hatred. That does not sound much like the jihad Wood discusses in his article. Nihad

Awad, executive director of the council of American-Islamic relations claims that Wood

interchanges the word terrorism which is a violent act with the word jihad which is a religious

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[38] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[39] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[40] Bahi, Nagib. "Sunnism vs. Shiism." Lecture, Drake Model Arab League, Des Moines, November 10, 2015.
[41] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[42] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[43] "Just Islam : The True Meaning of Jihad." Just Islam : The True Meaning of Jihad. Accessed December 14, 2015.
http://www.justislam.co.uk/product.php?products_id=2

obligation.[44] While it is understandable why those unfamiliar with the religion would make this

mistake, it is important for policy makers to overcome this biased understanding of Islam.

Wood's article is the primary source used in the following argument on the theology of Daesh,

however, it is important that readers understand the following caveats to this analysis. Jerusha

Tanner Lamptey, a professor of Islam at Union Theological Seminary claims that Wood's

argument perpetuates the false idea that Islam is a literal religion and that all Muslims must take

the violent aspects of their religion at face value.[45] It is this way of thinking that makes

organizations like Daesh seem inevitable, a dangerous precedent for the world to set.

Furthermore, Lempty says that by buying into the narrative of Islam as an inherently violent

religion we "inadvertently validate ISIS's voice."[46] In essence what Muslims around the world

have been trying to say is summarized by Lamptey, "The majority [of Muslims] do not subscribe

to [ISIS's] view of their religion. But they do subscribe to the idea of emulating the Prophet

Mohammad, upholding the text, and upholding the tradition, but come to very different end

points about what that looks like."[47]

So what is it that makes the militant Salafism of Daesh so different from the rest of

Islam? The tenants of Daesh's theology can be separated into three different aspects: territory,

apostasy, and apocalypse. First the authority of Daesh is rooted and intrinsically tied to the

territory that it controls. In order to be considered a caliphate, Daesh must maintain control of

territory, once it ceases to control territory it can no longer oblige Muslims to adhere to its

theology, causing the collapse of the entire system.[48] This is important because it means that

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[44] Jenkins, Jack. "What The Atlantic Gets Dangerously Wrong About ISIS And Islam." ThinkProgress RSS.
February 18, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015. http://thinkprogress.org/world/2015/02/18/3624121/atlantic-gets-dangerously-wrong-isis-islam/.
[45] Jenkins, Jack. "What The Atlantic Gets Dangerously Wrong About ISIS And Islam."
[46] Jenkins, Jack. "What The Atlantic Gets Dangerously Wrong About ISIS And Islam."
[47] Jenkins, Jack. "What The Atlantic Gets Dangerously Wrong About ISIS And Islam."
[48] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"

unlike Al Qaeda, Daesh cannot go underground if the pressure becomes too much.[49] This means

it is possible that if using military force Western powers can take back Daesh's territory the

organization itself will collapse; however, the consequences of such action will be discussed

later. Territorial expansion is also a duty of the caliph. If al-Baghdadi fails to gain more

territory he will prove himself unworthy of his role.[50] Interestingly, there are a number of

strategies that could be used by the rest of the world to work with such terrorists controlling

territory, like it did with the Taliban in Afghanistan that would amount to ideological suicide for

Daesh. This list includes recognizing any borders, ceasing to wage war for over a year,

accepting a UN seat, or signing a peace treaty for more than ten years. [51] All of this means that

Daesh is operating outside of the reach of global legal presence.

The second idea that drives Daesh's ideology is the idea of apostasy. Generally apostasy

exists in all religions and consists of denying the truth of your religion to accept another religion.

The cost of this crime in many Muslim countries is death, as it is in Daesh territory[52]. The major

difference Daesh and other Muslim nations adhering to *Sharia* or Islamic law is the way that

Daesh defines apostasy. For Daesh anyone who continues a non-Muslim government after being

educated about their duties to join Daesh is guilty of apostasy and marked for death.[53] In Islam

there is a concept of *takfiri* in which one Muslim accuses the other of apostasy; however, only

one can be right and if the accuser is wrong, Allah will sentence them to hell. It is similar to the

Catholic concept of excommunication. Therefore, *takfiri* is a serious accusation. However, al-

Baghdadi has practiced mass *takfiri*, in which he effectively claims that huge classes of Muslims

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[49] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[50] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[51] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[52] Note: While it is illegal to go from Muslim to Christian, those who were born Christian in Muslim lands are not guilty of apostasy.
[53] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"

as apostates.[54] Perhaps the most concerning example of this in Iraq is the mass *takfiri* of Shia

Muslims that compose the majority of the Iraqi population. According to Daesh, "Shiism as

innovation [to the Koran] and to innovate on the Koran is to deny its initial perfection."[55]

Some of this mass death sentencing by Daesh can be understood in the apocalyptic

conceptualization of reality preached by Daesh. According to the Daesh narrative there will be

12 caliphs before the end of days and al-Baghdadi is the eighth. They believe that the Armies of

Rome will meet and defeat the Armies of Islam in Northern Syria. (Daesh has claimed that this

particular location is Dabiq, Syria which is currently part of Daesh territory.) Finally they

believe there will be a final show down with the anti-Messiah that will occur in Jerusalem in the

course of a new Islamic conquest.[56] This final day in Jerusalem will come down to 500 Muslims

remaining in Jerusalem having been nearly defeated by the Armies of Rome until Jesus (the third

most important prophet in Islam) comes down to save them and help the Muslims take over the

world.[57] This ties back to the idea of *takfiri* because before the end of days all but 500 Muslims

must die. This means that it is Muslims, far more than Westerners that are the targets of Daesh.

The Fight against Daesh:

The United States has three major avenues through which it attempts to combat Daesh:

the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), the Information

Coordination Cell, and the use of lethal force. Although CSCC and the Information

Coordination Cell are different aspects of the U.S. Department of State's efforts to combat Daesh

they will be discussed together because they both fall under the constructivist paradigm.

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[54] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[55] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[56] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[57] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"

CSCC is a team with in the U.S. Department of State (DoS) that serves as "an information war room against terrorist networks."[58] Its mission is to sow doubt among those tempted to join Daesh. More recently DoS established the Information Coordination Cell which works with U.S. embassies, military, and allies to create a global messaging campaign against Daesh. The major difference between the two is that the Information Coordination Cell operates primarily with information dispersed abroad while CSCC directly creates counter-messaging opposed to Daesh. CSCC was established by executive order in September 2011 and was originally focused on combatting Al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula.[59] The U.S. Government felt obliged to respond to Al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula once their leader Anwar al-Awlaki presented extremist propaganda in English.[60] When the idea was presented to President Obama in 2010 he reportedly said, "This is what I've been asking for—why haven't we been doing this already?"[61] And he wasn't the only asking, when the first CSCC director Richard LeBaron told his wife about his new position she asked, "You're doing this now?"[62] It seemed that this program should have been undertaken long ago. However, the Bush Administration faltered on how to use propaganda effectively with new media, while terrorists bulldozed ahead into the internet age.[63]

[58] Miller, Greg. "Panel Casts Doubt on U.S. Propaganda Efforts against ISIS." Washington Post. December 2, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/panel-casts-doubt-on-us-propaganda-efforts-against-isis/2015/12/02/ab7f9a14-9851-11e5-94f0-9eeaff906ef3_story.html?wpisrc=nl_draw2.

[59] "The U.S's Uneasy War against Jihadist Propaganda." Washington Post. Accessed December 14, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/propaganda/.

[60] "The U.S's Uneasy War against Jihadist Propaganda."

[61] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules." Washington Post. May 8, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-a-propaganda-war-us-tried-to-play-by-the-enemys-rules/2015/05/08/6eb6b732-e52f-11e4-81ea-0649268f729e_story.html.

[62] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."

[63] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."

CSCC was originally designed to combat Al Qaeda Arabian Peninsula and their use of social media, however, Daesh has taken the use of social media to a level far beyond what Al Qaeda ever imagined.[64] Al Qaeda started out with grainy videos of Osama Bin Laden looking at the camera giving a lecture in Arabic about events that had happened months in the past because of the time it took to smuggle out the video.[65] Compare that to the hour long documentary "Flames of War" published by Daesh that was filmed Daesh battles on GoPros and was published in multiple languages including English.[66]

But Daesh has not limited themselves to the use of video to get their message across. They have created thousands of Twitter accounts. Some of these are Twitter accounts are controlled by people within Daesh territory, but they also come from the supporters of Daesh in other states. The top four countries of Twitter accounts that are in support of Daesh are as follows: Saudi Arabia (866 accounts), Syria (507), Iraq (453), and U.S.A. (404).[67] Anonymous, a group of hacktivists, took down more than 5,500 Daesh related Twitter accounts in response to the Paris attacks, and had previously taken down 149 Daesh related websites.[68] Daesh has a huge and active online presence, and unfortunately it has been a highly successful recruiting tool for the organization.

CSCC Director Alberto M. Fernandez created a program that directly combatted this Daesh propaganda. In response to "Flames of War", in 2014 CSCC created a video called "Welcome to ISIS Land" which was based on Monty Python's portrayal of the crusaders and

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[64] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."

[65] "The U.S's Uneasy War against Jihadist Propaganda."

[66] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."

[67] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."

[68]"#OpParis: Anonymous Takes down 5,500 ISIS Twitter Accounts." RT Question More. November 17, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015. https://www.rt.com/news/322427-anonymous-isis-twitter-accounts/.

opened with, "Run do not walk to ISIS Land" and proceeded to juxtapose the language of Daesh

recruiters with images of the atrocious acts. Daesh then responded with a video entitled, "Run,

Do Not Walk to the U.S. Terrorist State."[69] This kind of back and forth grew increasingly

common between CSCC and Daesh. Daesh even created a Twitter handle @Al-Battar with the

singular purpose of arguing with the posts of CSCC.[70]

However, this argumentative tone did not sit well in Washington. Because CSCC was

now posting in English as well as regional languages, a change made during the Fernandez

administration, the posts were under increased scrutiny from elected officials, bureaucrats, and

outside experts alike. Rita Katz of SITE Intelligence Group said, "It's better to not do anything

than do what they're doing at the State Department."[71] And she was not alone in her opinion,

critics of the program at the White House and in the Department of State saw it as using the

enemy's playbook, of sinking to their level. These negative opinions of the management of

CSCC led to the replacement of Fernandez with Rashad Hussain.

Hussain changed the tone of CSCC. Under his leadership CSCC worked to highlight the

hypocrisy inherent in Daesh arguments, the accounts of Daesh defectors, and the battle losses

Daesh suffered.[72] It is believed that with the right dispersal of information, the facts will speak

for themselves.

However, in light of the serious terrorist attacks occurring in the West, a critical eye

turned again on CSCC, who is supposed to convince potential Daesh converts from carrying out

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[69] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."
[70] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."
[71] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."
[72] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."

these attacks. The White House called for an outside six person outside panel of marketing

experts from Silicon Valley, New York, and Texas.[73] This panel had "serious questions about

whether the U.S. Government should be involved in overt messaging at all."[74] Their skepticism

comes in part because the U.S. is not a strong voice to turn away Middle Eastern fighters; many

of those joining from the region already harbor grudges against the U.S. or other Western states.

The words of the DoS will likely only egg them on. Furthermore, there has been little evidence

that the program has been successful in keeping new recruits from joining.[75]

And while these are all legitimate concerns with the program, many are intrinsic in the

constraints placed on CSCC. For example, it is impossible to prove a negative which is what

would be necessary to show that CSCC is stopping people from joining Daesh.[76] Nobody is

going to come to the DoS and say "I was going to join Daesh, but I really liked your video so I

didn't," therefore, to measure the program on that standard is patently unfair. The three main

challenges currently faced by CSCC are as follows: outnumbered, tiny budget, and the necessary

American stamp. First off, CSCC is absolutely outnumbered and outmanned. Daesh has, if

Anonymous is believed, more the 5,500 Twitter accounts. CSCC only has enough staff to fill a

single office. Furthermore, due to budget constraints CSCC is only online five days a week and

not during peak hours of internet traffic in the Middle East.[77] That is not the fault of those

working in those offices, it is the fault of those in charge of the purse strings. To put the lack of

funding into perspective, CSCC receives between $5-6 million a year that seems like a large

amount until it is compared to the $150 million a year spent by the Department of Defense on

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[73] Miller, Greg. "Panel Casts Doubt on U.S. Propaganda Efforts against ISIS."
[74] Miller, Greg. "Panel Casts Doubt on U.S. Propaganda Efforts against ISIS."
[75] Miller, Greg. "Panel Casts Doubt on U.S. Propaganda Efforts against ISIS."
[76] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."
[77] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."

winning hearts and minds, or the $250 million a year used by the Central Intelligence Agency for

social media and open source analysis.[78] The people working at CSCC are being asked to do

effectively the same work with 3.3% of the budget given to the Department of Defense. It is no

surprise that Will McCants of the Brookings Institution said that among those involved in CSCC,

"morale is low, and they're not getting any clarity from the top about what they're supposed to

be doing."[79]

However, there is hope on the counter-messaging front. While the outside panel did not

support the current efforts of overt propaganda, they endorsed efforts to have Muslim countries

allied with the U.S. undertake these efforts. This would be beneficial because information sent

from third party states do not have to carry the seal of the U.S. Government; one of the greatest

hindrances to the spread of CSCC's message. This concept falls more under the jurisdiction of

the Information Coordination Cell. The independent panel also supported a program at CSCC

that never got off the ground for lack of funding to create a counter-radicalization "SWAT" team

that could be sent to European cities where officials noticed spikes in Daesh recruitment.

The ineffectiveness of U.S. propaganda efforts has limited their options to the use of

drones, Special Forces, and other forms of lethal force.[80] Miller and Higham recognize the

success of the U.S. of degrading the standing of Al Qaeda not only in the U.S., but also among

militant groups. They noted, however, that, "Al-Qaeda's brand of militant ideology, however,

has only spread."[81] The United States has an unquestioned military advantage against any other

nation in the world. They spend more money on defense than any other country; they have a

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[78] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."
[79] Miller, Greg. "Panel Casts Doubt on U.S. Propaganda Efforts against ISIS."
[80] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."
[81] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."

nuclear arsenal; and one of the best trained and armed armies in the world. The U.S. and their

allies have attacked Daesh. Currently twelve Arab and Western countries including but not

limited to the U.S., France, Jordan, and UAE carry out strikes against Daesh territory. The U.S.

Department of Defense reports that U.S. attacks have destroyed 16,075 Daesh targets. Of these

attacks 6,846 have been undertaken by the U.S. and 1,937 have been done by their various

allies.[82] Furthermore, the U.S. has created a coalition of more than 60 countries to stand in

opposition of Daesh.

While the U.S. and/or its allies certainly have the capacity to wipe Daesh off the face of

the planet it is necessary to understand how the use of force ties into reinforcing Daesh's

narrative. In order to effectively destroy Daesh any outside force would have to create

substantial collateral damage. It is this so called collateral damage that has caused such anti-

American sentiment throughout the Middle East. It is the collateral damage of bombing

weddings and blowing up children that turns the people of the region against outside forces. As

bad as Daesh is, the necessary violence to overthrow them militarily will only create more people

willing to undertake terrorist actions.

Particularly dangerous is the idea of putting ground troops in Syria. The U.S. has now

admitted to placing Special Forces troops in Iraq.[83] Woods explained the importance of a Battle

at Tabriq to Daesh, to put ground troops in Syria might bring that idea to fruition, at least from

the perspective of Daesh.[84] If Daesh were to be routed at the Battle of Tabriq by a much greater

external force it would be difficult if not impossible for Daesh to remain in control. However,

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[82] "Special Report: Inherent Resolve." Special Report: Inherent Resolve. Accessed December 14, 2015.
http://www.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/0814_Inherent-Resolve.
[83]"US Deploying New Force to Boost Fight against ISIS." CNBC. December 2, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2015.
http://www.cnbc.com/2015/12/02/us-deploying-new-force-to-iraq-to-boost-fight-against-islamic-state.html.
[84] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"

Wood also recognizes that to do so plays into and reinforces the narrative of the conflict as defined by Daesh.[85] Returning to the Daesh conception of the apocalypse, the ideology asserts that the Army of Rome will invade the caliphate and will be defeated in Dabiq, Syria after which the Islamic State will fail until only 500 true believers will be left in Jerusalem, where Jesus will descend and save the Muslims and help them take over the world. Unfortunatley, there is some ambiguity in understanding what the Army of Rome is, either it is the Army of the Eastern Catholic Church or the Turkish Army, or it is any infidel army in which case the U.S. Army would serve the role nicely.[86] Thus as soon as a Western force, or any force coming out of Turkey invades Daesh, we risk reinforcing their ideology.

Outside of the possible ideological concerns with placing ground troops in Syria, there is a real political cost to any U.S. administration that draws the public into what might be called, another "Desert War." This would be particularly costly for President Obama who promised in his campaigns to pull out of both Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, there is not only reticence on the grounds of ideology but also on the grounds of politics.

Argument:

The successful action, or at least the measurable, visible, action in the fight against Daesh has taken place under the auspices of military strikes against Daesh positions. Military strikes create a sense of shock an awe to the people in the region, but perhaps more importantly at times to the American public at home. However, if this realist strategy were alone sufficient to defeat terrorism, Al Qaeda would no longer exist. Instead, our marked military destruction of Al Qaeda drove the organization underground and caused a massive growth in the power of the ideology.

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[85] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"
[86] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"

It is, therefore, safe to assume that the use of solely military power against extremist groups will not be successful.

The U.S. has recognized that to defeat extremist Islamic terrorist groups the ideology must be defeated. Unfortunately, to this point, the U.S. had no idea how to defeat the ideology. The U.S. has historically combatted ideology through alternate ideology, economic support, and coup d'état's. The entire Cold War was effectively the U.S. and the Soviet Union engaging in opposing ideological promotion. The U.S. strategy of the Domino Theory shaped huge portions of U.S. foreign policy and is based on an assumption of ideological promotion. It assumes that because the U.S. is expansionist in nature as a rising hegemon, the U.S.SR, must likewise be interested in promoting its ideology. This fits perfectly into Mearsheimer's statement "most states are likely to recognize their own motives at play in the actions of others"[87]. The Domino Theory claimed that if any one country fell to communism then all other countries in that region would fall as well. It was this theory that pushed the U.S. into many conflicts throughout the Cold War, perhaps most notably, the Vietnam War. U.S. ideological self-promotion began before the U.S. became a country, but has become substantially more influential since the Treaty of Versailles and President Wilson's Fourteen Points. The fourteenth point is the right of all nations to self-determination. This idea has been central to every major revolution or revolt in the world since. It is this right to determine your own destiny that drove the Arab Spring movement that would eventually cause the power vacuum in Syria that permitted the rise of Daesh. However, Daesh is not interested in self-determination because it has based its right to exist not within the body of nations but as a right from Allah.

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[87] John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 35

The U.S. also has a long tradition of providing economic aid in order to convince countries to come to the ideological position of the U.S. The Marshall Plan in Europe was developed to rebuild Europe so that there would be no need to turn to socialism to combat the post-war economic depression. While the Marshall Plan was largely effective in Western Europe, it would not work as a strategy to combat Daesh. The U.S. maintains a stringent policy that they do not negotiate with terrorists, to start providing them with massive economic aid would seem incredibly hypocritical. Furthermore, Daesh will never accept that form of aid from the U.S. or any other country because to do so would require Daesh to recognize the legitimacy of a non-Muslim state, which runs counter to their entire ideological base.

The final tool in the U.S. tool belt of ideological combat, is the dreaded coup d'état. The U.S. is, unfortunately, incredibly competent at carrying out these coups, though not always in support of democracy and rarely with a vision for the strategic The continuous string of coups in Syria between independence in 1946 and the rise of Hafiz al-Assad in 1971 provide an example of coups by the U.S. followed by coups by the Soviet Union. However, this strategy will not work because even if the U.S. Navy Seals assassinated al-Baghdadi tomorrow Daesh would only grow, because the ideology survives beyond any single individual. The evidence of this reality exists in understanding the role of the assassination of Osama Bin Laden in the function of Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda did not cease to exist without the leadership of Osama Bin Laden. While their organizational structure has certainly floundered under different leadership, their ideology is far from dead. Rather it has mutated to take the form of al-Baghdadi's Daesh.   While killing al-Baghdadi and replacing him with a more pro-American leader could prove a valuable strategy in destabilizing the state structure of Daesh, it does nothing to counter the idea that has spread like wildfire.

Clearly the individual policy strategies that arise from a realist conceptualization of Daesh do not work, however, there is a more central deficiency in conceptualizing Daesh within the paradigm of a realist reality. *Daesh is not a state.* One of the primary tenets of realism is that the primary actors in world affairs are *state actors*. In spite of what it claims, Daesh still fails to fulfill the requirement of gaining international recognition. So long as Daesh remains outside of the state system, and their ideology indicates they have no interest in doing so, realist strategies for coping with Daesh will continue to fail.

But to abandon the strategies of realism without effective constructivist strategies to replace them is not only foolhardy, it places U.S. national security in extreme jeopardy. We cannot give up the realist strategies of bombing Daesh positions until we have a constructivist, counter-messaging strategy that will effectively replace these bombing strategies. And we absolutely cannot afford to allow Daesh's ideology to continue to grow as it will if we only adhere to the strategies of realism.

The questions that must then be answered are: Why is the U.S. so ineffective in counter-messaging? How do we improve these efforts? In order to understand why CSCC and Information Cell are not preforming at the level necessary to combat Daesh we must understand exactly what the U.S. Government has asked them to accomplish. They are being asked to fight a nebulous ideology on the new battlefield of cyberwarfare with minimal funds and personnel. Social media has changed the game in revolution and in warfare. The Arab Spring displayed the extraordinary organizing power of social media to create the potential for positive, democratic change. What Daesh has shown is the dark side of social media, the ways it can be used and manipulated to target fighters, to organize attacks, and to perpetuate a dangerous ideology. By

using social media Daesh can reach an unprecedented number of people that would not have been possible even for its immediate precursor, Al Qaeda.

CSCC has faced not only contextual challenges, but also practical challenges. The contextual challenges are problems that are beyond the control of any policymaker. They include the fact that the U.S. Government has no experience with counter-propaganda online. The "Welcome to ISIS Land" video illustrates the lack of consensus on how to combat terrorism. Fernandez saw that prior efforts in U.S. self-promotion were ineffective and instead took the offensive. However, the backlash he received not only within the U.S. Government but also the mocking done by the terrorists they cease to undermine shows the trial and error process CSCC is using to understand how to counter ideas in a cyber world. But the other major challenge faced by CSCC is a gross lack of funding. CSCC receives a budget of approximately $5-6 million annually which ends up making up 0.0015% of the total federal budget, and 0.012% of the federal budget dedicated to International Affairs.[88] In other words, the U.S. Government has not given CSCC a fighting chance because it has failed to give them a budget that even close to measures up to what they are being asked to accomplish. The government has mandated that the CIA, Pentagon, and the Department of Justice all contribute employees and resources to the CSCC, which is a Department of State program, and that is a step in the right direction.[89] However, these employees likely are not the best in their fields—why would the CIA send their best analysts to a program that is not their own?

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[88] "Federal Spending: Where Does the Money Go." National Priorities Project. Accessed December 14, 2015. https://www.nationalpriorities.org/budget-basics/federal-budget-101/spending/. I used the overall budget numbers to calculate my own proportions.
[89] Miller, Greg, and Scott Highman. "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules."

CSCC is not only limited in terms of the number and quality of their employees. They are also limited because they don't have the funds or the manpower to combat Daesh on Daesh's most important front. Daesh's ideology indicates that their primary initiative is to address the Muslim apostates before taking on the rest of the world. Baghdadi himself commanded that his troops, "deal with the *rafida* [Shia] first… then the *al-Sulhl* [Sunni supporters of the Saudi monarchy]…before the crusaders and their bases."[90] Certainly, al-Baghdadi is not opposed to te murder of Westerners when it serves his purposes, but it is not his primary initiative. An American joining the cause of Daesh creates wonderful propaganda to counter the message the West has been building for more than a century, but it doesn't further the immediate goal of Daesh to reach its apocalyptic end reality.

To defeat Daesh, to truly defeat them not just on a battlefield but to wipe their ideological underpinnings from the face of the planet, we must address the constructivist conception of combat. Constructivism focuses on the centrality of the way people conceptualize their own reality. It addresses the root of the problem, rather than only treating the symptoms. It is possible to defeat Daesh militarily because, unlike Al Qaeda, their legitimacy is tied to their control of territory. However, while a military solution is an option with *this* extremist group, it is only a band aid for this kind of thinking. Solving the problem of Daesh with airstrikes is like trying to cure skin cancer by cutting off huge sections of skin. It is painful and dangerous and it might be successful, but if the cancer has already taken root in the body, even if you cured the skin cancer it will come back as lung, or kidney, or brain cancer.

The ideological is central to this conflict. The U.S. Government and its allies in the coalition would not be discussing narratives, propaganda, or ideology if they were not already

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[90] Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants"

conceptualizing the world in constructivist terms. There would be no reason for Richard Stengel, Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy to claim that we are working closely with allies.[91] If the world is truly realist there is no need for public diplomacy, and there certainly is not a reason why the U.S., the strongest military superpower, would need to depend on their allies to defeat the militarily weak Daesh. Furthermore, if the ideology of Daesh was not important, Islamic scholars and average Muslims would not publically reiterate the fact that Daesh is not Islam. If Daesh is not convincing within the construction of Islam, there should be no need to combat it.

Conclusion:

The United States can choose to continue to underfund efforts in counter-messaging. It can choose to create bureaucratic obstacles that stop organizations like CSCC from successfully carrying out its mission. What it cannot do is avoid the consequences of those actions. Daesh may be defeated by the militaristic, hegemonic strategies preached by Mearshimer and his realist colleagues because the centrality of territorial control to the Daesh's legitimacy leaves the organization powerless to command the *umma* without the physical location of the caliphate. However, so long as the ideology perpetuated by Daesh remains, U.S. security remains at risk. If Daesh is defeated, but extreme, militant, Salafism is allowed to continue all they will have accomplished is a momentary lull before they create something worse than before. Realist strategies drove Al Qaeda underground and caused them to become far less relevant among terrorist groups, but it did not destroy the ideology they preached. The U.S. cut off the head of one hydra and another grew—far more awful than before and now the world is facing Daesh.

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[91] Miller, Greg. "Panel Casts Doubt on U.S. Propaganda Efforts against ISIS."

Daesh has capacities unseen in other terrorist organizations with their mastery of social media, propaganda, control of territory, and complex state structures. The question then is: can the world afford to see the hydra head that will emerge if we cut off the Daesh head without killing the beast of extremist, militant Salafism?

  If we continue to approach the problem with a realist point of view the military might of the U.S., with enough political will, can topple the Daesh caliphate, however, to do so sets the world up for a fate far more dangerous and unknown. By understanding the narrative and ideological backing of Daesh through a constructivist lens the U.S. will be able to defeat not only Daesh, but the ideology that gave birth to the organization. To choose the constructivist path will be harder. It will require the U.S. to learn to fight a battle using the unconventional weapons inherent on a cyber battlefield. It will require them to learn to counter an idea rather than to perpetuate it. It will take more patience, more empathy, more specialization, more time, and likely more money than the bomb-all-enemies approach of realism. However, the price of failing to take the challenging path is far greater. In the words of the wise Professor Dumbledore, "At some point we must decide between what is right and what is easy."[92]

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[92] JK, Rowling *Harry Potter and the Goblet of* Fire (New York: Scholastic Inc., 2000), 724